

G. J. FOCK, Dr. Phil.
MCGREGOR MEMORIAL MUSEUM
KIMBERLEY

Distribution of Animals on
Rock-Engravings in the
Northern Cape

Over the last few years a trend to establish game reserves on privately-owned land has been noticeable. Farm-owners are becoming increasingly game-conscious and stocking their farms with a variety of game. R. C. Bigalke and J. A. Bateman published a review of the present situation under the heading: "On the status and distribution of ungulate mammals in the Cape Province, South Africa". This short paper attempts to give the distribution in 12 Districts in the Northern Cape as recorded on rock-engravings by hunter-gatherers of ages past.

As we have every reason to assume that no drastic climate changes occurred in this area during the past 10,000 years - an assumption which is based on climatological and archaeological evidence - the area under review has been semi-arid and the indigenous vegetation more or less the same as prevails today. The prehistoric rock-engravings for which the area became famous, especially after the publication of Maria Wilman's "The Rock-engravings of Griqualand West and Bechuanaland, South Africa" in 1933, are very naturalistic with the exception of the most recent ones. One is therefore able to distinguish between blue and black Wildebeest, Bushpig or Warthog etc. Only in the De Aar District did I come across engravings of animals which one can only identify as "Antelope" without being able to determine the species. This district shows clearly that giraffe were extremely rare, although elephant, rhinoceros and hippopotamus were common.

Most of the sites were visited by the author himself and only in a few instances did he rely on information contained in published references and copies of rock-engravings housed in the McGregor Memorial Museum. The latter collection dates back to G. W. Stow the oldest copies having been made nearly a century ago. A total of 69 sites with engravings were examined. These are mainly situated in the vicinity of rivers or open water.

As some of the more plentiful smaller buck are rarely represented, one can assume that the artists did not indiscriminately depict anything they saw but used their discretion and a materialistic view might have been prevalent, e.g. there is much more flesh on an eland than on a springbok. The eland is by far the most

frequently and most artistically depicted game. While there may have been other reasons for the frequency in which eland are portrayed I would like to suggest their actual abundance in the Northern Cape had a bearing on this.

The following lists are not made up in respect of actual numbers depicted on the various sites (e.g. even if 10 eland occurred on rock-engravings this animal is only listed once in a district), but are intended as an indication as to the type of animal present at that time which was found to be worth recording by the artist.

Animals recorded in:

BARKLY WEST (4 sites): Antbear, baboon, eland, elephant, duiker, gemsbok, giraffe, hartebeest, hippo, lion, ostrich, roan antelope, rhino, springbok, steenbok, tortoise, (blue and black) wildebeest, zebra.

BRITSTOWN (2 sites): Eland, elephant, gemsbok, giraffe, kudu, lion, ostrich, quagga, rhino, warthog, zebra.

COLESBERG (1 site): Blesbok, eland, rhino.

DE AAR (6 sites): Antbear, baboon, blesbok, bushpig, eland, elephant, feline, fish, gemsbok, giraffe, hartebeest, hippo, hyena, jackal, kudu, ostrich, quagga, rhino, rooi ribbok, roan antelope, springbok, warthog, black wildebeest, zebra, several bucks unidentified.

HAY (2 sites): Blesbok, eland, giraffe, jackal, ostrich, rhino.

HERBERT (7 sites): Antbear, eland, giraffe, hartebeest, hippo, kudu, jackal, quagga, rhino, zebra.

HOPETOWN (3 sites): Buffalo, bushpig, eland, elephant, hartebeest, hippo, kudu, lion, ostrich, warthog, zebra.

KIMBERLEY (16 sites): Antbear, baboon, buffalo, crane, duiker, eland, elephant, gemsbok, giraffe, hartebeest, hippo, hyena, jackal, kudu, lion, mon-goose, ostrich, quagga, roan antelope, rhino, rooi ribbok, springbok, warthog, (blue) wildebeest, wild dog, zebra.

POSTMASBURG (5 sites): Baboon, eland, feline, giraffe, jackal, kudu, ostrich, quagga, zebra.

TAUNG (2 sites): Baboon, buffalo, bushpig, eland, elephant, gemsbok, giraffe, hartebeest, hippo, jackal, ostrich, rhino, warthog, zebra.

VRYBURG (16 sites): Antbear, baboon, blesbok, buffalo, crane, eland, elephant, gemsbok, giraffe, hare, hartebeest, hippo, hyena, jackal, kudu, feline, mon-goose, ostrich, quagga, roan antelope, rhino, secretary bird, springbok, tortoise, warthog, (black and blue) wildebeest, wild dog, zebra.

WARRENTON (2 sites): Antbear, bushpig, eland, giraffe, hippo, ostrich, quagga, rhino, rooi ribbok, (blue) wildebeest.

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List of the distribution of 38 different animals in 12 Districts
(69 sites) in order of frequency:

Animal	Number of sites	%
Eland	52	11.88
Rhinoceros	35	8.04
Ostrich	32	7.30
Giraffe	24	5.48
Elephant	22	5.00
Gemsbok	21	4.78
Zebra	20	4.56
Antbear	19	4.34
Hartebeest	18	4.10
Feline	17	3.88
Hippopotamos	15	3.42
Quagga	15	3.42
Blue Wildebeest	14	3.20
Black Wildebeest	12	2.73
Warthog	12	2.73
Kudu	11	2.51
Roan antelope	11	2.51
Jackal	9	2.05
Buffalo	8	1.82
Bushpig	8	1.82
Horse	8	1.82
Wild Dog	6	1.36
Baboon	5	1.14
Hyena	5	1.14
Springbok	5	1.14
Tortoise	5	1.14
Blesbok	4	0.91
Crane	3	0.69
Duiker	3	0.69
Mongoose	3	0.69
Rooi Ribbok	3	0.69
Fish	3	0.69
Secretary bird	2	0.46
Sheep	2	0.46
Steenbok	2	0.46
Bustard	2	0.46
Hare	1	0.23
Springhare	1	0.23

**Distribution of animals on rock-engravings compared with present day occurrence
(in brackets) according to J. A. Bateman and C. R. Bigalke**

DISTRICT	Barkly West	Brits town	Coles burg	De Aar	Hay	Her- bert	Hope- town	Kimber- ley	Post- masburg	Vry- burg
Antbear	x(x)	-(x)	-(x)	x(x)	-(x)	x(x)	-(x)	x(x)	-(x)	x(x)
Blesbok	-(x)	-(x)	x(x)	x(x)	x(x)	-(x)	x(-)	-(x)	-(x)	x(x)
Bushpig	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	x(-)	-(x)	-(x)	x(-)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)
Duiker	x(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	x(x)	-(x)	-(x)
Eland	x(x)	x(-)	x(-)	x(-)	x(x)	x(x)	x(-)	x(x)	x(x)	x(x)
Gemsbok	x(-)	x(-)	-(x)	x(-)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	x(x)	-(x)	x(-)
Harte- beest	x(x)	-(x)	-(x)	x(-)	-(x)	x(x)	x(-)	x(x)	-(x)	x(x)
Kudu	-(x)	x(-)	-(x)	x(-)	-(x)	x(x)	x(x)	x(x)	x(x)	x(x)
Springbok	x(x)	-(x)	-(x)	x(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	x(x)	-(x)	x(x)
Steenbok	x(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)
Warthog	-(x)	x(-)	-(x)	x(-)	-(x)	-(x)	x(-)	x(-)	-(x)	x(x)
Black Wil- debeest	x(-)	-(x)	-(x)	x(-)	-(x)	-(x)	-(x)	x(x)	-(x)	x(-)

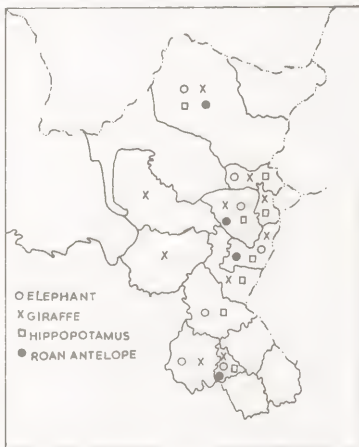


MAP I - Key Map showing the 12 districts under review

FOCK - ANIMALS ON ROCK ENGRAVINGS

Two Districts (Taung and Warrenton) not listed by Bateman and Bigalke were also left out in the above survey.

A comparison between animals found on engravings and their present occurrence is given in the above table. Since proto-historic and historical-times the following animals became extinct in the Northern Cape and are therefore not listed (their one time distribution appears on 2 special maps): buffalo, elephant, giraffe, hippopotamus, quagga, rhinoceros, roan antelope and zebra. Judging from the engravings - the youngest of which are about 150 to 200 years old - all these animals still existed at the beginning of the 19th century. This assumption corresponds with the reports of the early travellers and hunters. During the 19th century the quagga became extinct and other animals probably migrated northwards due to the activities of farmers, miners, and mainly hunters (which included to no small extent Griquas and Koranna). The smaller buck although not represented on



MAP II - One time distribution of animals no longer occurring in the Northern Cape.



MAP III - One time distribution of animals no longer occurring in the Northern Cape.

the engravings but still occurring today are, of course, indigenous game. The other, big game animals, like eland, gemsbok, kudu and wildebeeste always found the Northern Cape a suitable habitat as is proved by their successful re-introduction in recent times. When introducing game into a certain area it might be expedient to ascertain also from rock-engravings in the vicinity whether such animals were at any stage prevalent there as rock-engravings in some instances date back several thousand years.

REFERENCES

- Bigalke, R. C. and Bateman, J. A. (1962) On the status and distribution of ungulate mammals in the Cape Province, South Africa in: *Ann. Cape Prov. Mus.*, 2:85-109.

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